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ABSTRACT

The Parents as Leaders (PAL) program involved 195 parents of Head Start children in western Kentucky. The goals of the program were to: (1) use the expertise of veteran Head Start parents; (2) study the role of self-efficacy in parent involvement; and (3) identify ways of enhancing the participation of parents not involved in Head Start activities. Seven veteran Head Start parents attended leadership training sessions and then taught parent participants in Head Start classes child development principles and model ways of working with children. Self-efficacy measures were given to Head Start parents in August and again in December. Parent involvement was also measured. Results indicated that: (1) significantly more parents from PAL classes than from non-PAL classes participated in Head Start activities; (2) parents from PAL classes contributed significantly more hours to volunteer work than parents from non-PAL classes; and (3) there was no difference between pre- and post-test self-efficacy scores. The effect of an incentive program on parent participation was also examined. Results indicated a significant increase in parent volunteer activity. (BC)

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Innovative Project

MURRAY HEAD START
MURRAY BOARD OF EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT

PARENTS AS LEADERS: SELF-EFFICANCY STUDY

Prepared for:
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Office of Human Development Services
Department of Health and Human Services

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FINAL REPORT

PARENTS AS LEADERS: SELF-EFFICACY STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Positive self-esteem has been widely recognized as an essential ingredient in growth because it gives us the motivation to attempt new tasks. An even more appropriate concept in the exploration of skill acquisition and motivation may be self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief or attitude that one holds about one's ability to successfully accomplish a task, in this case, parenting. For the "Parents As Leaders" study, it was assumed that successful veteran parents who, presumably, share much in common with new parents, may serve as effective role models helping the latter group develop the necessary sense of self-efficacy. The veteran parents may be able to raise the level of self-efficacy of the new parents by using a parent involvement model designed for this specific purpose. With these higher levels of self-efficacy, new parents should be more motivated to acquire appropriate parenting skills. This study of the role of self-efficacy in the parent involvement effort can help us determine the components helpful in the development of successful parent involvement models.

A significant number of parents are never influenced by the parent involvement component of Head Start because they do not participate in parenting training programs or activities. The "Parents As Leaders" study sought to develop a program to enhance these parents' interest and participation by exploring

various approaches aimed at encouraging the parents to take part in parenting training.

OBJECTIVES

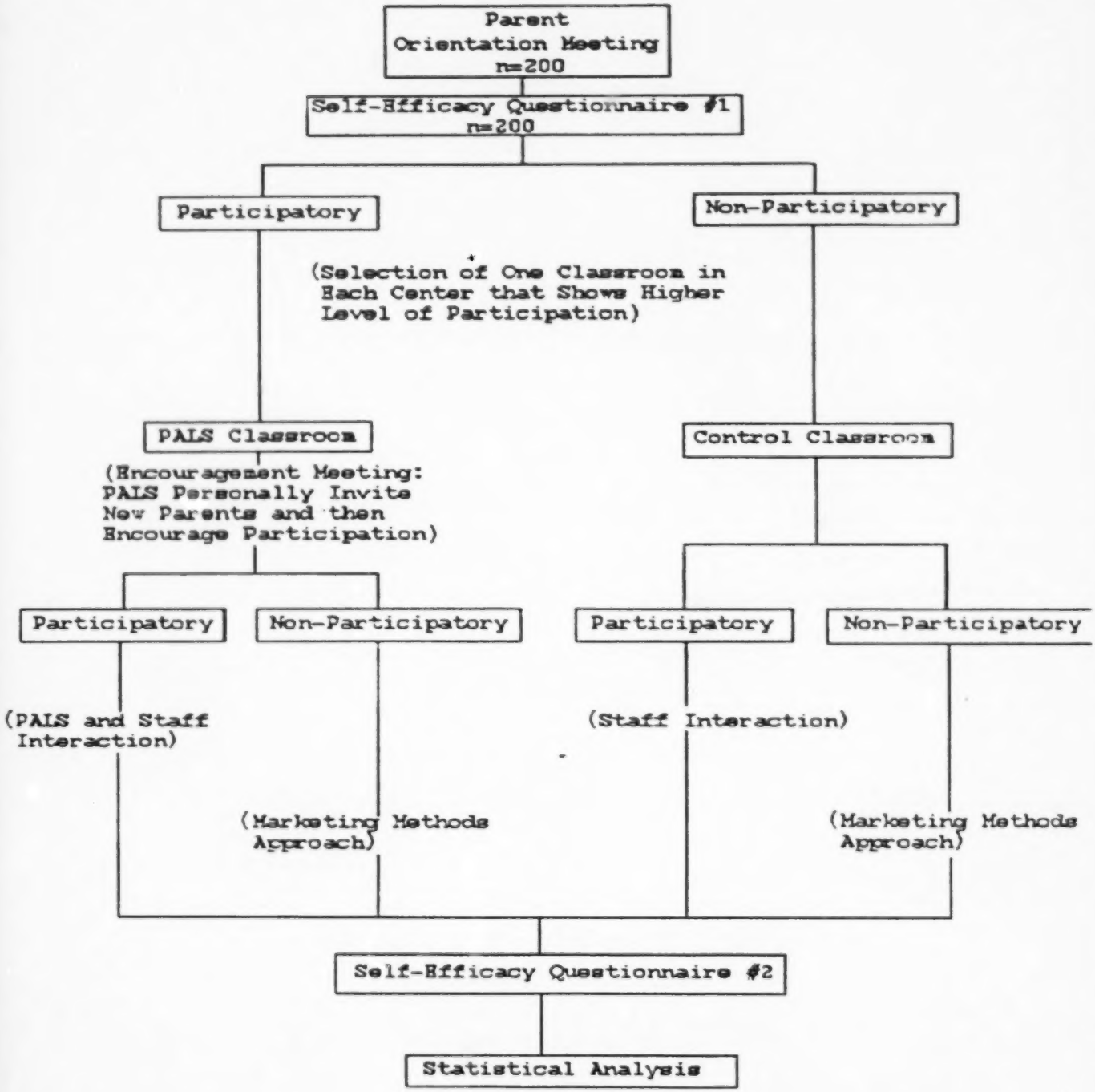
1. To recognize and use the expertise of veteran Head Start parents and study the role of self-efficacy in the parent involvement effort.
2. To identify specific ways of enhancing participation among parents who do not choose to become actively involved in training programs and activities provided by the Head Start program.

PROGRAM DESIGN

The "Parents As Leaders" program involved 195 parents of Head Start children in a three county area of western Kentucky. Thirty-two percent of the parents had no high school diploma and five percent needed literacy skills. Of the population served, 51 percent were single parent female heads of households. Family Needs Assessments indicated that 40 percent of the families had requested parenting training. The high risk families targeted by this study experience problems which affect both parents and children.

Seven veteran Head Start parents with leadership potential were selected from a total of 20 potential leader parents. Sixteen leadership training sessions were provided to these seven parents during which they were trained as trainers. One of the leader parents was selected as the coordinator of the project under the supervision of the Head Start Parent Involvement Coordinator.

Murray Head Start
PALS Research Design



These veteran Head Start parents were linked to new Head Start parents to provide a bridge from the home to the school. One leader parent (PAL) worked in one Head Start classroom in each of the four centers for three and one-half months during the second year of the project. The primary role of the leader parent (PAL) was to work with parent participants in the classroom to teach good child development principles and model appropriate ways of working with young children. The total leader parent (PAL) group (7) provided training to all parents in each of the four Head Start centers.

During the first year of the project, instruments were developed to measure self-efficacy and effective parenting. These instruments were used as a pre-test and post-test for 195 Head Start parents.

SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

1. Effects of the Parents as Leaders Project on Parents

It was originally theorized that parents involved in classroom activities with a leader parent (PAL) present would derive benefits from this experience (as compared to parents volunteering in classrooms that did not have a PAL person). The benefits to be gained were thought to occur by interacting with and observing the PAL person.

The first thing to look at is the amount of involvement in classroom volunteering activities. This is important because one must be in the classroom to experience benefits (from PAL or from the Head Start program itself). Therefore, the first

analyses (a series of chi-square analyses) examined the number of volunteers for each classroom activity, as well as the number of volunteers for each classroom that had a PAL person in it and classrooms without a PAL person in it and classroom without PAL persons. The following numbers indicate that: 1) the PAL program is successful at getting early involvement of parents in the classroom activities, and 2) the PAL program is successful at maintaining more involvement of parents in some volunteer activities. Notice that more parents in the PAL classrooms were also involved in non-classroom volunteer activities.

The following table indicates significant differences for PAL classrooms and non-PAL classrooms in the number of volunteers for various activities or months.

Activity	PAL	NON-PAL
S.T.E.P.*	10 (30%)	1 (5%)
Observation	32 (97%)	18 (95%)
Home visits	27 (82%)	12 (63%)
Transportation	32 (97%)	18 (95%)
Eat with children	31 (94%)	17 (89%)
Other	31 (94%)	15 (79%)
Monthly total for classroom activities (September)	15 (45%)	1 (5%)
Monthly total for classroom activities (October)	24 (79%)	7 (37%)
Monthly total for all activities (Oct.)	28 (85%)	15 (45%)
Total Involvement	33	19

*Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

The second group of analyses (a series of t-tests) examined differences in the average number of hours volunteers invested in the various activities, as well as average number of hours invested each month for volunteers in classrooms with a PAL person and non-PAL classrooms. Only significant differences between PAL and non-PAL parents are reported. Results indicated that PAL parents spent an average of 10.40 hours in all volunteer activities during the month of September, while non-PAL parents invested an average of 3.61 hours during this month. Finally, PAL parents spent 2.45 hours in classroom volunteer activities during September and non-PAL parents spent an average of 0.71 hours in the classroom during September.

It was thought that specific benefits parents would achieve from their interactions with PAL persons would be an increase in their self-efficacy and their self-esteem. Parents completed a parental self-efficacy measure constructed for the present study, a general self-efficacy measure (Tipton & Brink, 1984), and a self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1979). These measures were completed before the Head Start program began in August and then again in December. There were no significant increases in self-efficacy or self-esteem as measured by the instruments. Upon reflection, we were perhaps too optimistic to believe that an individual's efficacy and/or esteem could change a significant amount in three and one-half months. Another overly optimistic notion was that the instruments chosen and/or developed for the present study were sensitive enough to assess small changes in efficacy and esteem. Indeed, previous uses for

the general self-efficacy measure and the self-esteem measure have been to assess differences between groups of individuals. These instruments typically have not been used to track changes within individuals.

The PAL program provided the leader parents with knowledge and confidence. Of the seven parents, two are currently enrolled in college and have been Dean's List students for two semesters. Two parents will enroll in college in the Fall, 1990 and two parents are now gainfully employed.

2. Effects of the Incentive Program on Parental Involvement

Another objective of the present study was to establish the effectiveness of an incentive program as a way to increase parental involvement in volunteer activities especially among non-participating parents. The incentive program chosen was in the form of a Volunteer Sweepstakes. All 195 parents received a flyer describing the sweepstakes and announcing two prizes: a $30 basket of groceries at Thanksgiving and a $70 cash prize to be given at Christmas in each of four Head Start centers. To participate, parents were given credit for each volunteer hour in the form of a sweepstakes ticket on which they recorded their name and which was placed in a box for the two drawings. Volunteer activities were weighted with more "tickets" given for volunteer tasks considered most important. The tasks were weighted as follows:

a. Work at home making Children's Activities Packets (CAP) for each center = 1 ticket per volunteer hour

b. Participation in the center in non-classroom volunteer activities (assembling CAP packets, bulletin boards) = 2 tickets per volunteer hour

c. Attendance at parent trainings (S.T.E.P. classes, stress management, child development) = 3 tickets per volunteer hour

d. Work in the classroom = 4 tickets per volunteer hour

The non-participating parents were divided into two groups. One-third, the control group, received only the flyer describing the sweepstakes. Two-thirds received the flyer, home visits from a PAL, personal hand-written notes, phone calls, and one-on-one contact in the center to encourage and stimulate participation in volunteering.

The incentive program began in November and continued through December. To assess the effectiveness of the program, we compared the two months prior to the incentive program and the two months the incentive program was used. The following analyses reveal that the incentive program was successful in increasing parental involvement in Head Start volunteer activities. Only significant results are reported.

Several t-tests, which included all parents (n-195), indicated that parents spent an average of 18.31 hours during the last two months in volunteer activities, whereas parents only spent an average of 13.94 hours during the first two months in volunteer activities. It was also found that parents spent an average of 3.18 hours in classroom volunteer activities during the last two months, while parents spent an average of 2.34 hours in classroom volunteer activities during the first two months.

Results based on originally nonparticipatory parents, n=162, (those volunteering for less than 4 classroom hours during September and October) provide more impressive evidence as to effectiveness of the incentive program. Parents spent an average of 14.78 hours during the last two months in volunteer activities, whereas parents only spent an average of 9.09 hours during the first two months in volunteer activities. Results also indicated that parents spent an average of 2.08 hours during the last two months in volunteer activities, while parents spent an average of 0.44 hours in classroom activities during the first two months. A chi-square analysis also suggested that more parents volunteered in the classroom during the last two months as compared to the first two months. During the last two months, 51 parents (31.5%) volunteered in the classroom, whereas only 32 parents (19.7%) volunteered during the first two months.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Veteran Head Start parents are a valuable resource both as positive role models who significantly increase the involvement of new parents and who, in effect, reduce the client load for Family Service Workers.
2. Planned, systematic leadership training increases the effectiveness of strong parents in serving as role models and provides a sense of empowerment in their own lives.

3. Extrinsic motivators or incentives are beneficial in encouraging the initial involvement of some Head Start parents.

FUTURE PLANS

Three grants using the "Parents As Leaders" approach have been submitted. Potential funding sources include the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services and Administration on Aging.

Murray Head Start will assist an elementary school in using this approach to transition parents of preschool children into public school.

MATERIALS

The following materials were developed through this grant:

1. Selection Criteria for Leader Parents
2. Parents As Leaders Interview Form
3. State Parent Survey Form
4. Research Design
5. Self-Efficacy Instrument
6. Guidelines for PALS
7. PALS Logo
8. Volunteer Parent Inventory
9. PAL Video

DISSEMINATION

1. Local efforts
   a. Advisory Committees
   b. Policy Council
   c. Boards of Education
   d. Murray State University
   e. Adult Learning Center
   f. Newspaper
   g. Annual Report of the Murray Independent Schools
   h. Community groups
   i. Radio

2. State efforts
   a. Kentucky Head Start Directors Meeting
   b. Kentucky Head Start Association Conference
   c. Kentucky Head Start Speaks

3. Regional efforts
   a. Region IV Technology Conference
   b. Midwestern Psychological Association Convention

4. National efforts
   a. Psychology in the Schools Journal

SUMMARY

The Parents As Leaders: Self-Efficacy Study video provides an overview of the project and significant results.